

Horological Customers

Introduction:

This was produced as a precursor to drawing up a business plan. A fledgeling business has a much better chance of survival if it has a well thought out marketing strategy. A marketing strategy has to be built on an understanding and classification of potential customers. Hence I wanted to understand not just who might buy horological services, but how many people there are in each group, how easy they are to sell to and any constraints on dealing with them.

Caveats:

- *The list was drawn up to be useful to me* - research time was limited. It should not be considered exhaustive or definitive. *Use with caution.*
- *Scope* - The focus is on clock customers. Customers for watches or non-horological topics were considered out of scope. (Although many may be common.)

Structure

Looks at all the classes of customer who may be interested in horological services, and for each:

- *Customer* - with sub headings for better classification and elimination of repetition
- *#* - approximate size of the group, High, Medium or Low - subjective measure
- *EoA* - Ease of Access. High, Medium, Low - subjective measure
- *Pros* - aspects that make this group attractive to work with
- *Cons* - aspects that may act as a barrier to working with this group.

Customer #	EoA	Pros	Cons	
Institutional owners.	↓	↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Have specific expectations of those that provide service, equipment, reporting, invoicing processes, policies etc. These can be off-putting for an established business, so competition may be limited. ✓ Generally good opportunities for repeat business once rapport established. ✓ May have needs that individuals do not, e.g. maintenance assessments, formal reporting and advice, so potentially take different/additional services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Long cycle between bidding for work and getting it. ✗ Payment cycles can also be extended. ✗ Identifying the right individual to talk to is often difficult. ✗ Formal bidding processes are time consuming, and require an understanding of the 'correct' responses. ✗ May demand levels of formality including written policies, processes, procedures, which introduce overheads.
<i>Heritage sector</i>	↓	↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Understand conservation, may pay for authenticity. ✓ See the need for, and will usually fund, the production of comprehensive documentation. Potentially increases the size, and thus profitability of project work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Need to 'speak the language' and walk the talk of the sector to establish credibility. ✗ Being active in this market may limit options. e.g. Trading and Conservation services can be seen as a conflict of interests. ✗ Can require additional qualifications. e.g. ICON membership. ✗ Requires conservation grade/type equipment and consumables, hence investment.
Museums	↓	↓		
•National	L	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Many have many clocks and related items as a part of their collection. ✓ Those that do <i>not</i> have their own horologists, will usually understand the need for specialist support. ✓ 'Pack behaviour' - once credibility is established with one, other doors open. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Extremely difficult to 'break into' as a market. ✗ Some, though not many, have own horological staff. ✗ Public procurement processes (OJEU). ✗ Limited locations.
•Local (& Regional).	M	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Easier to get work than nationals. ✓ Relatively numerous, and spread across the country. ✓ 'Pack behaviour'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Price sensitive. ✗ Funding extremely difficult. There has been a period of closure of regional museums, especially clock based. ✗ Individual museums smaller than nationals, so smaller projects, higher cost of sales.
•Independent	M	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Usually easy to deal with. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Funds difficult, but they may be able to raise it for projects. ✗ Expenditure focused on public access, not conservation. ✗ Tend to be small. ✗ Administration may not be a strength.
Great Houses	↓	↓		
•National Trust	H	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Houses across UK. ✓ Many clocks, which they like to keep running. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ ICON registration required by their policy. ✗ Establishing bridge-head may be difficult.
•Private	M	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Long-term perspective, not necessarily price sensitive for the right service. ✓ Generally own range of older clocks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ If single historic house = limited number of clocks. ✗ Difficult market to get into, to establish relationships. ✗ Not always well funded.
•Royal collections	L	VL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Extensive collections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Have their own horologists.
Religious	↓	↓		
Churches	H	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Lots of turret clocks, some others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Need to understand and fit to their way of working. ✗ Less opportunity for domestic scale clocks. (i.e. non-turret).
Palaces/HQs.	L	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Most religious bodies have administrative centres, some with status clocks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Need to fit to their requirements, processes, ways of working etc.
Temples	M	M	(As above)	(As above)
Mosques	M	M	(As above)	(As above)
Public Sector	↓	↓		
Central Government	M	VL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Including Westminster, and Houses of Parliament, etc.) ✓ Status clocks and well known public clocks. ✓ Employ their own horologists. ✓ Buildings across the country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ See OJEU warning above. ✗ Difficulty in finding the right entry points.
Local Government	H	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Turret clocks, and some status clocks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Also subject to OJEU. ✗ Cash-strapped.
NGOs	↓	↓		

Customer	#	EoA	Pros	Cons
•Charities	M	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Old established charities may have 'accidentally' collected clocks. Some will have put these in a museum (e.g. Coram > Foundling Museum). Others retain them. Some feel a duty of care, but have an expertise gap. ✓ May create further opportunities through the charities sponsors - corporates, individuals, great houses etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Money will be focussed on their charitable aim so may be price sensitive. ✗ Only large/old charities likely to have clocks. ✗ Can be difficult to find the right entry point.
•Quangos. e.g. British council	M	L	Old established ones may have boardroom and other 'status' clocks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Difficult to penetrate as market. ✗ Public Sector procurement processes.
NHS	H	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Trusts, particularly Hospital Trusts, may have multiple mechanical clocks - Turret, boardroom etc clocks. ✓ Trusts talk to each other, so possibility of 'domino effect marketing'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Fragmented, each trust is an individual entity, so little economy of scale possible. ✗ Public sector procurement processes.
Corporate	↓		↓	↓
PLCs	M	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Not usually particularly price sensitive if the service is there. ✓ Mostly clocks are modern, some board-room and/or public clocks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Usually not many clocks. ✗ Difficulty of establishing direct links - large corporates prefer to deal with other large corporates.
Hotel Chains	L	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ May have more clocks than PLCs. ✓ Some have 'boutique hotels' within the group, these often have considerable managerial independence - treat as well-funded boutique hotels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Difficulty in establishing credibility, large chains are looking for corporate-to-corporate relationships. ✗ Most chains want geographical spread.
Boutique Hotels	H	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ May be using clocks to create ambiance, so want them running. ✓ Can provide advertising possibilities to their clients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Most have few non-quartz clocks. ✗ Relationships have to be established individually.
Clubs	M	M	(Sporting, leisure etc. Similar to boutique hotels.)	
Individual Owners	↓		↓	↓
Inherited Wealth	L	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ As with great houses, may have accumulated clocks. ✓ Long-term perspective, not necessarily price sensitive for the right service. ✓ Those that have multiple properties, likely to have many (old) clocks. ✓ Establishing the right relationship is key. ✓ Generally reliable payers. ✓ Opportunities for repeat business. ✓ May onward recommend services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ May want a complete service - i.e. 'clocks', from quartz, through carriage to turret. Difficult for a solo. ✗ Difficult market to get into, difficult to build relationships.
Self made wealth	L	L	<p>(See also collectors below.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Establishing the right relationship is key. ✓ Opportunities for repeat business. ✓ May onward recommend services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ May be value-driven. ✗ May want a complete clock service so full workshop and other facilities. ✗ Likely to have fewer clocks than old money.
Collectors	↓		↓	↓
... of Clocks	L	H	<p>e.g. By aesthetic, type, geography, mechanism, manufacturer, period, or even eclectic collections.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ By definition will have many clocks, so opportunities for repeat business. ✓ Once relationship is established, ongoing work possible. ✓ May have mixed collection and want one-stop service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Need sufficient focused expertise to establish credibility. ✗ Lots of competition for the few collectors out there. ✗ Collectors can 'play' with clocks, leaving difficult repairs. ✗ Strong ideas about what they want done.
...of Objects which incorporate a clock.	M	M	<p>e.g. Maritime, automotive, aeronautical or railway collectors, clocks in art-house glass or ceramic cases (e.g. Lalique, Meissen.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ May be good, profitable niches to be exploited here as the combination of subject matter expertise will be rare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Need to learn to talk the language of the particular related objects. ✗ May have to build network within subject to deal with non-horology conservation aspects - e.g. ceramics or glass conservator.
.. of related mechanisms	M	M	<p>e.g. Gramophones, barometers, musical boxes, automata, clockwork toys etc.</p> <p>Techniques and skills can be transferrable from horology and the tight specialism may mean that competition is limited.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ These are not clocks. New skills and (possibly) new tooling is required. ✗ May already be specialists serving the market. ✗ The clock element of the object may not be seen as important, so due diligence is advised before investing in servicing a market.
Investors	L	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Tend to focus on high-value clocks, with focus on quality, may reflect in individual projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Their focus is on return-on-investment. So likely to be very price sensitive, and may push ethical boundaries. ✗ Likely to demand very high quality, and more complex procedures (e.g. Verge reconversion). ✗ May demand 'churn' - rapidity through the workshop, which can impact other business.

	Customer	#	EoA	Pros	Cons
<i>Hand-me-downers.</i>	H	H		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those who inherit clocks or are given them. ✓ Those that place emotional value on a clock tend not to be value-of-clock sensitive. ✓ Wide range of clocks to work on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Not an easy market to focus on - usually one-off items, so high on-costs. ✗ Will include poorer quality clocks. ✗ Some who have received clocks for free are very price sensitive.
<i>Mr/Mrs Average</i>	VH	VH		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Will include a wide variety of clocks. ✓ Relatively easy to access as a market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ May be price sensitive. ✗ Tend to be one-off items so high on-costs. ✗ Wide range will include poorer quality clocks.
Trade	↓	↓		↓	↓
<i>Retail</i>	↓	↓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Once trust established, potentially an ongoing income flow. ✓ Not all of them are reliable payers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ They need to make a margin on the work, so generally price sensitive. ✗ They will have capital tied up in the items, so time sensitive. ✗ Some, may press conservation ethics.
<i>Clock shops</i>	L	H		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Opportunity for long-term repeat business. ✓ Can act as both filter and factor, screening out some of the 'retail hassle' of dealing directly with clients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Focus is on modern clocks. (Plus vanishing trade, money is in watches not clocks). ✗ High street clock shops will usually have their own repairer. ✗ No control over the type or quantity of work heading your way.
<i>Antique Clock shops</i>	VL	H		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Opportunity for considerable stream of business. ✓ May get to work on 'named' clocks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Usually have their own clock repairer. ✗ Likely to have a specific 'house style' for repairs.
<i>Generalist Antique shops</i>	M	H		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Opportunity for long-term repeat business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Most antiques dealers will only have a few clocks pass their hands. ✗ Usually already have a 'tame' clock repairer. ✗ Trade is currently (2015) in the doldrums, margins are tight. ✗ May be pressure to 'just get the job done'.
<i>Specialist Antique shops</i>	M	M		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ If the specialism aligns with your workshop, and they need clock-repairs,great! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Usually already have clock repairers!
<i>Repairers</i>	↓	↓		↓	↓
<i>Of Clocks</i>	L	M		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ May buy deeply specialised work. Efficiency economies for this may give good margins. ✓ Once established, good repeat business available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Will have their own suppliers already. ✗ Low margin work.
<i>Of Related Objects</i>	L	H		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ May buy deeply specialised work, and high margins may be possible. ✓ Once established, good repeat business possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Low margin work. ✗ Difficult to contact.
<i>Auction houses</i>	M	L		Occasional work on 'good' clocks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Establishing links, then credibility. ✗ Speed is important to them
Enthusiasts	↓	↓		(Whilst individual Enthusiasts may be owners, this aspect is covered above. The entries below examine their client potential as non-owners)	
<i>Horology Technology</i>	L	M		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Allows expansion outside of the workshop - training, writing, talks etc. ✓ Opportunity to leverage technological understanding from workshop experiences. ✓ Can support other horological activities by building your brand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Often competing against amateurs, not always well-paid, or paid at all.
<i>Horology History</i>	L	M		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Allows expansion beyond the workshop. ✓ Can support other horological activities by building your brand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Time consuming to get up to a level of competence, hard to make a good hourly rate. ✗ Requires access to time/money expensive resources, e.g. books/libraries.
<i>Related Topics</i>	↓			↓	↓
<i>Horology is part of the object</i>	M	L		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Opportunity to leverage technology understanding from bench experience. ✓ Approaching the topic from the Horology end may allow perspectives that subject enthusiasts miss. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Very time consuming to get up to a level of competence, needs not just the horology knowledge, but also the subject matter specialism.
<i>Similarities to Horology.</i>	M	L		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Some opportunities to leverage technology understanding from bench experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Competing against enthusiasts.
Other Trades/Industries	↓			↓	↓
<i>Film, TV, Media</i>	L	L		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Generally time, not price sensitive. ✓ Advent of high definition TV creating market for authenticity in sets, so an expanding market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Production companies are looking for a one-stop-shop. There are established set-supply companies. ✗ Tight timescales, expect you to fit in with their production schedules.
<i>Removals</i>	M	L		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Unlikely to have specialist clock packers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Used to 'getting along' with clocks, and as they are insured, so to the removals company this may not seem a problem. You may have to find a way to market directly to <u>their</u> clients. ✗ Usually price sensitive. ✗ Need you to fit in with their timescales. ✗ Setting up will involve travel.